

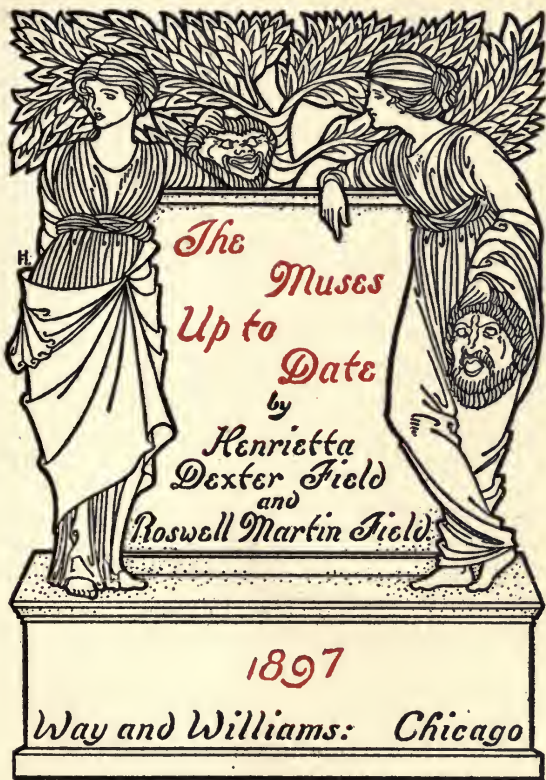
The Muses Up To Date

*Henrietta Dexter Field
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THE MUSES UP-TO-DATE.



*The Muses
Up to Date*

by
*Henrietta
Dexter Field
and
Roswell Martin Field*

1897

Way and Williams: Chicago

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TO THE MEMORY OF
EUGENE FIELD

THE AUTHOR'S PROLOGUE.

The attempt to write a series of plays for children presents at once the somewhat embarrassing question, who are children and what would they consider peculiarly appropriate in the line of plays? As to the first clause, the reader must decide for himself, but concerning the methods of play-construction for children the authors have entertained some positive opinions, based on observation of children's performances and on some experience with private theatrical entertainments. It has seemed to them that the most successful plays, so-called, are those which afford plenty of action with just enough dialogue to serve the purpose of introducing the specialties of singing and dancing, and of preserving a continuity of plot or story. In fact, experience has demonstrated that the most pleasurable entertainments given by children have been those in which the playwright has sacrificed his own ambitions to the individual talents of the performers and to their natural liking for songs, and dances, and tableaux, and artistic groupings. Plenty to do and little to say may be considered, all in all, the principle on which children's plays should be founded and on this principle the collaborators in this little book have proceeded.

Another point demonstrated by experience is that plays in which the characters may be assumed exclusively by girls are often the most successful. It does not follow that boys have not been considered in the preparation of this volume, but the point has been nevertheless borne in mind, and if boys are not available or regarded desirable it will be easily possible to dispense with their services in a majority of the plays offered. The play of "Cinderella," as herein presented, has been put on by girls ranging from eight to fifteen years of age, with possibly more satisfactory results than would have been reached with boys in the cast. The advantage of a company exclusively feminine will be at once appreciated by all who have had experience with dramatic rehearsals.

We do not feel that an apology is necessary for the surrender of so much space to the story of Cinderella. It is a popular theme in childhood and affords dramatic possibilities which every child immediately recognizes and enjoys. "The Modern Cinderella" is a whimsical overturning of the old story, following the same general lines with a shifting of personal characteristics. "The Wooing of Penelope," (reprinted by kind permission of the Chap Book) is a shadow play, to be enacted in pantomime behind a sheet or thin curtain, while the lines are read to the audience just preceding the action. "The Muses Up-to-Date," written for girls, should be cast with reference to in-

dividual accomplishments required, and in this as well as in the other plays much latitude is given for incidental specialties. In "Trouble in the Garden" the principal feature is, of course, the groups of living pictures, and a small army of children will be required for its presentation, with opportunities for very pretty artistic effects and a demand for no little study and preparation of necessary properties. "The Fairies' Revenge" is in recognition of a not unnatural desire on the part of many children to assume Shakespearean characters, but it is not to be apprehended that such assumptions, as we have outlined, will too severely tax the capability of any child. Not even Shakespeare himself could accuse us of gross plagiarism.

So much for a prologue which was begun as a well intended explanation and which is taking on the nature of an apology. The stage is waiting and we have overlooked the point that the author should not be heard from until the audience calls him. Let us ring up the curtain.

H. D. F.

R. M. F.

Buena Park, October, 1897.

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THE MUSES UP-TO-DATE.

A MYTHOLOGICAL LIBERTY IN TWO ACTS
WITH A PROLOGUE.